

News

Donation enables Lehigh radio station to expand signal reach



Kalin Ojert/B&W Staff

A shelf of CDs lines the wall of Lehigh's WLVR radio station studio in Grace Hall. The radio station, which broadcasts shows from both Lehigh students and community members, will increase its reach this year due to a donation made in 2008 by an alumnus and former staff member.

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After a Lehigh alumnus and avid listener of the WLVR radio station made a \$10,000 donation in 2008 to the station so he could listen to it from his home in New Jersey, his wish for the station to expand its reach will now become a reality.

WLVR is Lehigh's radio station, which also services the greater Bethlehem area. It is run by both students and members of the community.

After meeting with the alumnus — a former WLVR staff member who asked to remain anonymous after giving his donation — the WLVR staff presented the proposal to the Dean of Students Office in 2009 and the signal expansion was approved. The tower, which will increase the signal from the current 33 watts to 200 watts, aims to benefit over 146,000

households in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

"The listeners of the greater Lehigh Valley have been asking for a power increase at WLVR since 2001," said Alfred Fritzinger, general manager of WLVR. "They answered that question in 2010 by donating over \$17,000 in the first and only on-air fundraising campaign at WLVR."

The high demand to expand the radio station comes after it was named "Best College & Community Radio Station" by the Lehigh Valley Music Awards eight times between 2005-2013.

"A lot of people at Lehigh don't even know we have a radio station, so we're trying to gain recognition on campus," said Jason Levine, '17, who manages the station's public affairs.

While not a huge presence on Lehigh's campus, WLVR has a large following-base in the Bethlehem community with thou-

sands of listeners tuning in every day. Fritzinger said listeners have called the station to say they purposely pull over in their cars before they are out of signal range to listen to a special block of songs or an interview.

"That should be clear enough to any radio station that the signal is in demand," Fritzinger said.

Although the signal expansion is an extensive project, there will be little change to the operations and music programming of the station. Julianne Kerwood, '17, who also works in public affairs for the station, said there won't be any change to the actual programming on air because the listeners already like what the station plays. She said the station has not received any complaints, so they don't see a reason to change anything.

The station plans on working more to leverage Lehigh's academics to gain recognition on

campus.

"We are planning to launch 'Prof Talk' as a regular feature in the spring semester of 2015," Fritzinger said. "The goal is to use our student staff of WLVR to reach out to the faculty and produce radio interviews that will inform our listening community of various topics, while serving an educational mission."

According to the WLVR executive board, the expansion has not been welcomed with open arms by the administration at Lehigh.

"It's been over four years of constant delays, bureaucracy and red tape to get this project completed," Fritzinger said.

Now that the signal expansion is finally underway, WLVR said it hopes the new signal will allow Lehigh alumni to tune at any time for a brief glimpse into Lehigh life, whether living locally in the Lehigh Valley or listening online from anywhere around the world.